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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CHINA-JAPAN RELATIONS, U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

¶1. Summary: While Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies gave front-page coverage to an accident that happened at the Kaohsiung Zoo Wednesday evening, news coverage on April 12 also focused on the battle over the ownership of the Taiwan Television Enterprise, one of the island's four terrestrial TV networks, and on the 2008 presidential elections. The pro-status quo "China Times" devoted more than half of its second page to an exclusive interview with Vice President Annette Lu, in which a news story carried the following headline: "Regarding the Four Nos, Lu Asks the United States Not to Press [It] Any More." The sub-headline added "[Taiwan] has Long since had Independent Sovereignty; the Republic of China is Taiwan."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "China Times" op-ed piece commented on Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Japan. The article said "a profound 'tectonic movement' has occurred under the tense surface of China-Japan relations." A separate "China Times" analysis said the fact that the Taiwan issue was not put into words or included in the China-Japan communique indicated that the distrust between the two countries has yet to subside. An op-ed piece in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times," on the other hand, discussed the U.S. foreign policy and said "a full appreciation of the strengths and particularly the weakness of the US position in the international community provides an indispensable context for how the US will subsequently act when confronting new challenges." End summary.

¶3. China-Japan Relations

A) "Unexpected Improvement in China-Japan Relations"

Professor Lin Chong-pin of Tamkang University's Graduate Institute of International Affairs & Strategic Studies opined in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (4/12):

"Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao arrived in Japan yesterday for a visit, and it is expected [his trip] will help expand bilateral economic cooperation. It has been six-and-a-half years since a Chinese premier visited Japan the last time, and China-Japan ties, which have been ice-covered for several years, will begin to thaw. The fact that new Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had visited Beijing October 8, 2006 before he visited the United States marked the initial breakthrough of the bilateral ties between Japan and China. ... As a matter of fact, a profound 'tectonic movement' has occurred on the tense surface of China-Japan relations, and one will easily misjudge the situation if he seeks to predict the future based on facts in the past. ...

"Japan has been lingering at the crossroads for a long time. On the military aspect, it went eastbound and secured an alliance with the United States, and just recently it has established a security cooperation relationship with Australia. On the economic aspect, Tokyo went westbound and started cooperation with China. If the

United States loses its predominant strength when being caught in the quagmire of Iraq, while China continues its economic expansion, Japan will face a significant challenge. ..."

B) "'Taiwan' Issue' Is Not Included in the Communique, Distrust between China and Japan Fails to Subside"

Journalist Lin Ke-lun wrote in an analysis in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (4/12):

"The strategic significance of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Japan this time lies in the hope to establish a strategically reciprocal relationship between China and Japan, and to outline the rules of game for the two countries' future 'strategic' engagement by signing an official communique. But the fact that the Taiwan issue was not put into words and included in the communique as Beijing desired indicates that the distrust between China and Japan still remains. ..."

¶4. U.S. Foreign Policy

"What Faces the Next US President?"

Kurt Campbell, CEO and co-founder of the Center for a New American Security, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (4/12):

"With the US presidential contest in full swing, it is prudent to reflect on what the 44th US president will inherit in terms of foreign policy. This context will have a significant bearing on how the US chooses to deal with potential challenges, conceivably even tensions across the Taiwan Strait. ... So a full appreciation of the strengths and particularly the weakness of the US position in the international community provides an indispensable context for how the US will subsequently act when confronting new challenges -- particularly the drama that is playing out in Asia with a rising

China, a more assertive Japan, a nuclear North Korea, and a more militarized Taiwan Strait. ...

"To Asian friends, this contemporary foreign policy legacy and inheritance may seem somewhat peripheral, but nothing could be further from the truth. Asia is entering an extraordinarily dynamic period and will confront many of its challenges with a US arguably distracted and not at full capacity -- not a welcome reality for those committed to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region."

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